

Floreen Focus



We have just put the County's budget for Fiscal Year 2007 to bed. That gives me some breathing space to give you a status report on all that has been happening at the Council.

With this year's \$3.9 billion budget, we funded almost everything requested. And we were still able to stay within the charter limit, cut the property tax rate by 5 cents, and give each homeowner a \$221 credit on their tax bill. I am delighted to report that we were able to fund and enhance a remarkable number of community priorities that we all share.

Thank you for all the e-mails, calls, and letters you sent during our budget sessions. This input helped me to prioritize my spending decisions and make the best choices.

Nancy Floreen

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Planning

Clarksburg was a wake-up call, and the Council met the challenge. In the coming months you will see a sea change in the Planning Board leadership. We will be appointing a new Chair of the Planning Board very shortly and expect a new Planning Director to come on board soon after. We recently approved the appointment of the Director of Parks, Mary Bradford.

As a result of this new leadership, we will start the fall with a clean slate at Park and Planning. This will put Montgomery County back on the track of classic, purposeful land use planning and enforcement that it is famous for. My goal is to re-establish clarity and predictability for residents, neighborhoods, and the building industry in our land use work. Coupled with the numerous process changes we adopted this spring and enhanced technical resources we funded in the budget, this will take Park and Planning back to its respected leadership position within the community. I am sure that more details will require sorting out, but we have essentially given them the tools needed to get back on track. Stay tuned.

Education

This was a good year for education. The Council gave the school system every dollar it requested for its capital and operating budgets.

I am happy to report that we are keeping every school project on schedule, with the exception of

Bell's Mill Elementary School, which was accelerated and Seven Locks, which was returned to its original place in the queue.

We also fully funded the MCPS Operating Budget and added an important new teacher's pension program. I am especially pleased to report that this will put all-day kindergarten in every single elementary school next year. Our education system is a key component of our economic success and quality of life. It is one of my highest priorities, and I believe we have continued to serve our children well.

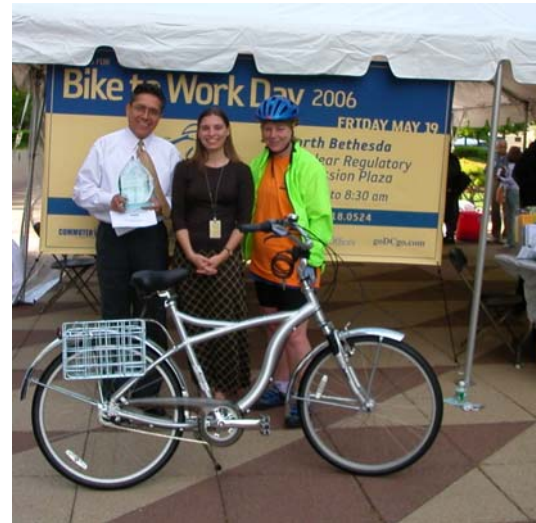
Transportation

This Transportation budget is a problem solver. We have heard our residents and focused funding where the concerns are. We added much more funding into road resurfacing, tree planting and pruning, pot hole filling, and bus stop improvements.

Most importantly, the Council agreed to a plan I sponsored with my colleague, Steve Silverman, to add \$80 million to the Capital Budget putting us in a position to negotiate with the State to accelerate state road (where most congestion exists) and transit projects. We expect this to kick start construction on critical problem interchanges at Montrose Road and MD355, Georgia Avenue and Randolph Road, and I-270 at Watkins Mill Road. In addition, we added the resources to build a second Glenmont Metro Garage, fund the design of a southern entrance to the Bethesda Metro (a key element of service to the

Bethesda community as well as the first step to the Purple Line), increase RideOn service on 24 routes, and provide free mid-day bus rides for seniors and people with disabilities.

Bike Trails



As a bicyclist, I am very supportive of improving and expanding our bike trail system, and I want to ensure that our bikeways program consistently gets a fair share of resources.

I am happy to say that this was a great year for trails. The Matthew Henson Trail and the Shady Grove Access Trail will be accelerated by 3 years with construction beginning in 2006.

We accelerated the Silver Spring Green Trail by 2 years, so there will be a 1 year delay rather than 3. We put the Rock Creek Trail Bridge over Viers Mill Road back into the budget for this year, and we added \$145,000 to fund the repair of the East West Highway shared use trail. In addition, I recommended and the Council supported increased resources for trail maintenance and \$160,000 to plan new bikeways. And last, but

certainly not least, we were able to fund repairs to the washed-out surface on the Georgetown Branch Trail east of the trestle in Silver Spring and pay for a study to fix the drainage problems there. I hope you will get out there and enjoy these wonderful hiker/biker trails.

Libraries

As many of you know, our library system has received minimal funding over the last several years and has sustained personnel cuts that jeopardized its ability to provide our residents with quality services. As a huge fan of libraries and in response to these cuts, I proposed early in our process to add \$2 million to the library budget to increase library staff, materials, self-checkout machines, and address facilities maintenance issues.

Even though the Council could not fund the entire \$2 million, I am happy to share with you that we were able to add almost \$1 million for frontline and shelving staff, materials, and deferred maintenance. Library service is so important to all our residents, from children not yet reading to seniors with more time to enjoy the books and audio materials. There are about 8 million visits a year to our libraries! Thank you all for your support in helping to get this done.

Arts and Humanities

Montgomery County has become an arts jewel, with venues throughout the area. From the Strathmore Concert Hall in North Bethesda to BlackRock Center for the Arts in Germantown to AFI in

Silver Spring to Adventure Theater in Glen Echo, families have access to cultural activities nearby and year round.

This budget was generous to the arts and humanities, offering grant money to individual groups and large umbrella organizations. I hope you take advantage of these wonderful centers by attending some of the performances this year. There is truly something happening for every age and taste.

A Tale of Two Cities

In my work as a member of the Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee, I supported appropriate dense development around the Shady Grove Metro Station and a far more modest plan for Damascus. We will focus development where the infrastructure is greatest in our Metro environments while retaining our low density, semi-rural character in wedge communities like Damascus that have little, if any, new infrastructure planned.

Housing

One of our greatest challenges is the need to provide housing that the average family can afford. Housing demand has pushed the price of home ownership beyond the reach of all but the most affluent. I led the effort to revise the regulations for the MPDU program to insure that affordable housing remains available for those who qualify. In addition, I co-sponsored Workforce Housing legislation to require construction of housing units for median income workers.

I will continue to search for innovative ways to support housing opportunities the average family can afford throughout the County. At the same time, we must continue to respect the needs and character of existing communities and find ways for our housing initiatives to meld comfortably with the folks already in place.

Environment



Expanding and protecting our parkland and green space, as well as improving our water quality have always been priorities for me, and this budget has lots in it to accomplish these goals. I co-sponsored a program with Steve Silverman that added \$1.25 million to improve stormwater management and water quality in streams and rivers in our urbanized areas, and ultimately the Potomac and Chesapeake. Also, I championed the increase in funding for

significantly more street sweeping in order to keep debris and chemicals out of our storm drain system and protect our waterways. In addition we appropriated almost \$10 million for our Legacy Open Space program and \$5 million for parkland acquisition. Substantial funding is also there for outreach on recycling - we must ramp-up this important program and work harder to get to our goal of recycling 50% of our waste stream.

Constituent Services

Have a problem? Let us know. If we don't know the answer, we usually have a pretty good sense of who does. Please don't hesitate to share your comments or questions with me. If I know what you're thinking, our County can truly benefit from your insight. So keep those calls and e-mails coming.

September 12

The September 12th Primary elections will be here before you know it. Be an informed voter:

- Attend candidate forums.
- Ask your neighborhood or civic association to sponsor a forum.
- Contact candidates and ask questions that are important to you or voice your concerns.
- Read the campaign literature.
- Actively support the candidate of your choice.